

Overview of non-fiction tool-kit

Type	Overview
Recount	<p>Recounts are one of the easier text-types to learn. Because recounts focus on re-telling what happened, they have many of the same key ingredients as stories. The main difference is that, whereas stories are imagined, recounts tell or, purport to tell, events that actually happened, in the first person if it is a personal recount or third person if the events happened to others. Recounts are a common form of non-fiction writing with applications throughout the school and in most areas of the curriculum, ranging from formal and accurate reporting to anecdotes and jokes. Like narrative, effective recounting relies on the ability of the writer to relate events in interesting ways. Like all text types, variants of recounts can occur and they can be combined with other text types. For example, newspaper 'reports' on an event often consist of a recount of the event plus elements of explanation or directions, information from other text types. The recount toolkit ideas below can be used in conjunction with ideas drawn from the fiction toolkits e.g. to develop character, settings plot, suspense etc. where they may be equally relevant depending on the topic and the audience.</p>
Instructions	<p>Instructional language is a familiar part of school and family life from an early age. 'Sit down', 'get your coat on', 'clean your teeth' etc., are common speech patterns, usually internalised before children begin school. The basic organisation of an instruction text is straightforward. The paradigm is a simple recipe with an introduction, some sequenced steps and a conclusion - mostly written with 'bossy' verbs. It is an important and challenging task to get this work effectively started with young children. However, a rather simplistic conception of instructional writing has led some to believe that it has only limited potential for older children – what's the point of carrying on writing recipes? They are wrong. Instructional forms of learning and writing should play a vital part in developing logical understanding especially in maths, science and technology where processes and procedures are at the heart of understanding these subjects. Also, instructional texts, more than most other text-types frequently depend on graphics: pictures, symbols, diagrams, flowcharts etc. to make processes clear, and this should be an additional challenge. The Y5/6 guidance underlines this, showing how instructional writing, should become progressively more complex. By the end of Y4, if the foundations have been well laid, instructional writing should become a significant asset to children's learning.</p>
Information/ Non-Chronological	<p>Information texts are sometimes called non-chronological reports to distinguish them from newspaper-type reports which tend to be narrative in form and more like recounts. Non-chronological reports are typical of encyclopaedia entries – almost every page of Wikipedia is written in this form. They generalise about a subject, to inform people objectively and are usually written in the present tense, which is why we call them information texts. Young children need to encounter this text-type in the classroom because, unlike recounts and instructions, it is not a common style in everyday language. For young children, learning to speak and write information texts should mark an important step towards more abstract and discursive thinking, essential for progress in most subjects of the curriculum. The language and vocabulary used to structure information writing shifts their thinking from the particular to the general, and from concrete towards more abstract ideas. Its aim is to collect, describe, classify and sequence experience according to common characteristics, binding them together as concepts. Information reading and writing should be a pervasive feature of work at every stage in children's progress through the primary school. As with all text types, non-chronological reporting is not a discrete form; elements of information writing may well be required in writing recounts, instructions, explanations, persuasive or discussion texts – and vice versa.</p>
Explanation	<p>An explanation generally answers 'how' or 'why' questions and includes causes, motives, reasons and justifications. The verb 'explain', however, is often loosely used to mean 'report', for example 'Explain what you did' generally means 'tell me or describe what you did' and may not have any reasons attached to it. Explanations are often similar in structure and purpose to information texts and sometimes sound more like instructions or directions than explanations; there is frequent overlap. The difference lies more in the purpose than in the organisation and structure of these texts i.e. shifting attention from describing what to explaining why. The similarity between these text-types means that some tool-kit elements are common to both. Despite this however, the cognitive difference between describing and explaining is important and often challenging, especially for younger children. In preparation for writing explanations teachers need to invest time in discussion about reasons, motives, causes related to the topic. The logical and causal thinking and speaking required are an essential foundation for progress in many subjects of the curriculum throughout the school.</p>

<p>Persuasion</p>	<p>Persuasion texts present a single point of view designed to encourage, persuade, cajole, sell, warn etc. Persuasion can be more or less objective and rational depending on the writer's purpose and the intended audience. For example, it would be pointless to try convincing the local council to approve a planning application using language typical of an advertisement. Nevertheless, informal, direct, idiomatic and figurative language, with opinions dressed up as facts are common elements in persuasive writing, where grabbing attention and securing commitment from the reader is of greater priority than with other text-types. Children's lives are steeped in persuasive language which, mostly, they accept uncritically. A particular benefit of working on this text-type is that it raises critical awareness of how language can be used to manipulate our thoughts, feelings and actions. Persuasion is common currency in advertising, publicity, invitations, complaints, journalistic commentary, political debate and estate agency. It is relatively easy to create examples and contexts for this work in the classroom and to link it to subjects across the curriculum. The structure of persuasive writing is relatively straightforward but its content is often rich in figurative language which is where much of the teaching needs to be directed. Persuasive writing is also a useful preparation for writing discussion texts which are designed to balance two sides of an argument and are generally more objective and rational. Like other text types, persuasive writing is not a discrete category. Depending on purpose and audience, persuasion is likely to include elements of: recount and anecdote to relate it to the reader's experience or give examples, information and explanatory writing to inform and justify, and directions or instructions to give it some imperative force. Neutrality is alien to persuasion so what it is not likely to contain is a balanced discussion of pros and cons!</p>
<p>Discussion</p>	<p>Discussion texts involve presenting a reasoned and balanced over-view of an issue or controversy. Discussion writing is highly prized because it involves presenting both sides of an argument, weighing up evidence and points of view and coming to a reasoned conclusion. One essential feature which distinguishes this from other forms is the need to be able to switch viewpoint as you write. This is a challenge for many younger writers which needs to be carefully managed, for example by choosing issues with clear opposing sides and focussing on each side of an argument separately before trying to bring the two together. Discussion writing is the foundation of more formal and discursive, essay-type, writing. Conquering this form with confidence by the end of the primary school will stand children in good stead for future success in the school system. Discussion contrasts with persuasion, which develops only one viewpoint (usually the writer's own) and may or may be based on preference, prejudice or other nefarious motives. Discussion, on the other hand, should be balanced, objective and reasoned. Discussion writing is not limited to controversial issues - although polarised views may make it easier to teach. Discussions can equally well be evaluations e.g. points of view about a film, a book or a product; or considerations of the pros and cons of a proposed course of action; or interpretations of outcomes, for example of a science experiment which lends itself to competing explanations. Because of its nature, discussion writing is often more cognitively demanding than other text-types, requiring a degree of hypothetico-deductive reasoning i.e. imagining possibilities then exploring the consequences. It needs to be carefully introduced from Y1 onwards but should have a major emphasis along with persuasive writing in Y5 and Y6. As with other text-types, discussion writing is not a discrete form and may well incorporate elements of recount and anecdote, instructions, explanations, and frequently, the use of persuasive language and argument.</p>